



Scottish Funding Council

Promoting further and higher education

Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

A' brosnachadh foghlam adhartach agus àrd-ìre

29 March 2012

*To all Scottish HEI principals*

Dear Principal

## Key Information Sets: update

I am writing to update you on developments in relation to three key areas concerning Key Information Sets (KIS). These are:

- institutional participation;
- fee information; and
- wording.

This is in response to the representations that Universities Scotland has recently made on behalf of the sector with regard to these issues, to the several institutions which have also contacted us directly, and to issues which emerged at the KIS workshop on 28 February 2012.

### Institutional participation

In my letter to you headed 'Public information: Key Information Sets' (28 November 2011, our ref: 228643488), I set out the decision of the Quality, Equalities and General Purposes Committee in this regard, to the effect that the sector should continue to participate in the UK website – Unistats – and provide the Key Information Sets. We therefore do not consider participation in the website as optional but we acknowledged that there might be issues in relation to the timing of participation. I therefore further wrote:

*Our preference would be that all institutions participate from the start of the new website, that is, from September 2012. However, we understand that this may present some challenges, and we are aware that some operational, developmental and implementation issues may yet still be to emerge.*

It remains our preference that all institutions participate in the new website from September 2012. I am aware of the considerable effort which is being made across the sector to meet this tight deadline. If, however, there are substantive reasons why your institution may not be able to participate from this September, I would appreciate formal notification of this along with some detail of the reasons for this. We, along with Universities Scotland, can then take a view on the implications of, potentially, a small number of institutions not participating in the first year.

### **Fee information**

We have followed up the concerns which US had flagged with regard to the presentation of fees and which also emerged at the KIS workshop on 28 February. We understand the concern that summary information on fees without adequate contextualisation may risk appearing misleading. The steer we received from the Executive Committee of Universities Scotland was that rather than presenting a single figure there should be a reference to the institution's website, ideally through an embedded link.

Having engaged in detailed discussion with HEFCE about the best means of addressing this issue and consulted informally with Universities Scotland, the best solution which is available currently is as follows: in common with the rest of the UK, the fees data which appears on the KIS website will be sourced from the UCAS information which institutions have provided to UCAS. This avoids institutions having to provide this information twice. For **Scottish HEIs** there will be text which automatically appears when viewing fees information to contextualise the figures. So, for Scottish-domiciled students there will be a standard statement - the precise wording of which is to be agreed - indicating the role of SAAS in this regard and referring the reader to the institution's website. There will be no embedded link to institution websites. The reader will also be referred to SAAS for further information. For RUK students there will be a standard statement (precise wording to be agreed) indicating that specific arrangements/conditions may apply and/or that the reader should go to the institution's own website (again, there will be no embedded link) for further important detail.

We have reached this position as a reasonable compromise given the timescale of the development of KIS and the Unistats website and with regard to maintaining comparability of information available to users of the website across the whole of the UK. A similar approach will be adopted in Wales to cover some issues specific to Welsh circumstances. I should further emphasise that this arrangement will apply for

the first year only, and we will review this specifically as well as taking part in the wider initial evaluation of the website, following its launch.

## **Wording**

At the KIS workshop organised by SFC at the end of February, several institutional representatives highlighted the importance of the work of the Wording Sub-group of the Higher Education Public Information Steering Group being sufficiently informed of the unique characteristics of higher education in Scotland. We have had detailed discussion with HEFCE and Universities Scotland about the best means of ensuring this and we also note offers of assistance from the sector in this regard. In addition to both SFC and US having the opportunity to engage with the Wording Sub-Group, Universities Scotland has, with our agreement, approached HEFCE with a proposal for an institutional representative on the Wording sub-group who can contribute both at a technical level but with an understanding of the Scottish context.

I hope that the information in this letter is of assistance both to you and to those in your institution who are working on the development of KIS and the new Unistats website. If you or any member of your staff would like further information on this, please contact me or my colleague Gus MacLeod, Senior Policy Officer (0131 313 6536, [gmacleod@sfc.ac.uk](mailto:gmacleod@sfc.ac.uk)). I have also copied this to participants at the KIS workshop as well as to Dr Kirsty Conlon at Universities Scotland.

Yours sincerely



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